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MCMXVIII

# TWO ESSAYS

1. *Don Quixote*
2. *The Politics of Burns*

BY

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## NOTE

THE Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow has kindly given leave to reprint the essay on *Don Quixote* from the *Proceedings* of the Society.

The second essay, on *The Politics of Burns*, was read to the Historical Society of the University of Glasgow on the 22nd of October, 1915, and published in the *Scottish Historical Review*, October, 1917.





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## Don Quixote<sup>1</sup>

I MAY be allowed to thank this Society for the honour they have done me, and especially for the opportunity of meeting some old friends, and of acknowledging some old debts to my native town. Before beginning on my proper subject, or speaking directly of Don Quixote and his books of chivalry, I should like to make mention of some things that are commonly ignored or forgotten by strangers in their estimate of Glasgow. Glasgow has a larger share in romance and romantic tradition than most people recognise ; though they have the salmon and the ring in the City Arms to remind them. St. Kentigern, according to some authorities, was the son of Owain ap Urien Rheged, who is called Uwain by Malory ; son of Urien, King of Gore, and of Morgan le Fay ; Owain, the hero of the beautiful Welsh story *The Lady of the Fountain*, the Iwain of Chrestien de

<sup>1</sup> Read before the Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow, 31st January, 1908.

Troyes and Hartmann von Aue, and of the English romance called *Ywain and Gawain*. St. Mungo is mentioned in one of the old French chivalrous poems, the romance of *Fergus*, and the same book tells how Sir Percival himself in his wanderings came to the Forest of Glasgow.<sup>1</sup> One of the chief documents for the life of Merlin speaks of his appearance on the hill beyond the Molendinar burn, uttering his prophecies to St. Kentigern on this side of the stream.<sup>2</sup> One must not spend too much time in these reminiscences, but before I leave them I would return to the Molendinar valley, and ask whether any place has been more honoured by romance than this, the seat of St. Mungo. I am not thinking now of Merlin, but of the High Kirk as Francis Osbaldiston saw it, of the crypt on that Sunday, and of the warning of Rob Roy. There is an imaginative, a spiritual city of Glasgow to be found in the books of different romancers and historians; it is not all vanity.

<sup>1</sup> La contree de Landemore  
Trespasse tote sans arest,  
Et puis s'en entre en la forest  
De Glascon qui molt estoit grande.

—*Fergus* ed. Ernst Martin (Halle, 1872) ll. 182-185.

<sup>2</sup> cf. H. L. D. Ward, "Lailoken (or Merlin Silvester)," *Romania* xxii. (1893) p. 516.

In addressing a philosophical society one naturally thinks of consulting the philosophers ; Hegel has given his opinion about Don Quixote, and with that I shall begin. It occurs in one of the liveliest passages of his works, the discussion of romanticism in the *Æsthetik*. One must remember the vogue of the German romantic school in Hegel's day, and also the strong foundation of Hegel's mind in Greek literature. Like Goethe, with whom he is in close sympathy, he is critical of the romantic ideas, and though he feels their attraction he is distinctly not of that party. Shakespeare and Cervantes command his respect ; Cervantes through his likeness to Shakespeare. It is worth pointing out that the characters of Shakespeare named by Hegel are not those we should innocently expect from a philosopher. Falstaff is there, but besides Falstaff, Hegel mentions Stephano, Trinculo and Pistol as examples of Shakespeare's power. What he admires most in Shakespeare is what he admires in Dante and in Don Quixote ; the strength of the individual character, the resistance of the character to all outward pressure. Like the people in Dante, like Don Quixote, these are each an intelligence, not argumentative machines (says Hegel) like the noble persons in classical French tragedy.

Don Quixote, in those lectures on literature, comes in after Ariosto ; Hegel is interested in the exploding of medieval romance, and he is careful to show that both Ariosto and Cervantes, in making fun of chivalry, preserve the chivalrous essence under other forms.

“In spite of his comic aberration Don Quixote retains what we praised in Shakespeare ; working in the spirit of Shakespeare, Cervantes has made his hero an essentially noble nature, endowed with a variety of intellectual gifts, never uninteresting. In his craziness he is always sure of himself, sure of his cause ; or rather it is just this sureness which makes his craze. If we had not this unreflecting security as to his actions and their consequences he would not be truly romantic, and this self-confidence regarding his aims and ideas is, all through, great and glorious with the finest touches of character. (1) The whole work is thus, on the one hand, a satire on romantic chivalry, charged with irony through and through, and thus different from Ariosto, whose pleasure in the maze of adventure is in comparison light and careless. (2) On the other hand, the adventures of Don Quixote are only the thread on which, in the most charming way, a number of really romantic tales are strung, as if to bring back in

its true value what the rest of the story with its comic spirit has dissolved.”

—Hegel, *Æsth.* II. p. 214.

I cannot find any other philosopher who speaks better sense than this. Dr. Alexander Bain has some remarks on Don Quixote not always easy to understand, *e.g.*:—

“*The ridiculous is clearly overdone in the attack on the puppets ; but this passes as satire due to the author’s abhorrence of the Moors. Otherwise, it is next thing to childish.*”

Bain says of Falstaff that “the delineation labours under a superfluity of grossness and coarseness except for the lowest tastes.” Perhaps he meant this for Hegel?

Hegel, I think we may say, is more satisfactory here than Bain, and more intelligible. He is also in disagreement with Byron ; he does not believe that Cervantes smiled Spain’s chivalry away. This is one of the falsities of Byron ; he sometimes spoke without thinking, and when he said this about *Don Quixote* he was not thinking about Cervantes ; he had a point to make. Let us see how much value there is in it. It does not, of course, mean that Cervantes put an end to the old-fashioned chivalry ; the whole scheme of the book implies that the old chivalry has gone ; even

the Landlord, who, as Dorothea says, is very fit to play second to Don Quixote in his love of romances, even the Landlord recognises that there are no real knight-errants now. It may be remarked here that Don Quixote was only about two hundred years too late ; the Knight in the Canterbury Tales had been an knight-errant, as we all know, and even very practical politicians, like Henry Bolingbroke, may go out on adventures against the infidel. But the fashion of the fourteenth century, the time of Chaucer and Froissart, was not that of the sixteenth—the older chivalry, which was a much more real thing than many people imagine, was gone, and the whole plot of the book means that it is gone.

If you take chivalry in another sense to mean simply high-flown notions of honour, then it is equally untrue and absurd to say that chivalry was exploded by Don Quixote. The point of honour is more emphatic in the generation of Calderon than it was before ; just as in England the cavalier ideal of Montrose's time is in many respects finer than the Elizabethan ; " the love of honour, the honour of love " are wrought into a more piercing flame of inspiration in the seventeenth century. If chivalry means heroism, then I think we know where to find some record of it in Spain after the



death of Cervantes. The greatest heroic picture in the world, I venture to think, is the *Lances* of Velasquez, the picture of the Surrender of Breda, in the Madrid museum. Velasquez is younger by two generations ; and it is to him that we must go, to a Spaniard of the decadent age, to see in a picture, in the meeting of the conquering hero and his noble defeated adversary, what is meant by the poets when they speak of deliberate valour.

Byron had an incurable habit of preaching, and allowed himself to be carried away by his moral fervour at the expense of historical fact. The author who, according to Byron, is guilty of his land's perdition—smiling chivalry away, and all the rest of it—was the author of a play called *Numancia*, which was chosen to be acted in Saragossa during the siege by reason of its patriotic ardour. The experiment was successful in its effect on the spirits of the town ; and the resistance of Saragossa, though it may not prove that the *Numancia* is a good play, at any rate shows that Cervantes was not always a discourager. Byron thinks *Don Quixote* was the saddest book. That certainly was not the author's own opinion about it. He thought it all very good fun.

*Don Quixote*, to begin with, is a literary burlesque ; not a satire on chivalry, but a gibe at the

ridiculous style and the poor common-place invention of the degenerate prose romances. Some people think of the book as if it were a modern democratic assault on the gentle castles of romance. It is not ; the books of chivalry are the books of all the people ; dear to the great heart of it. Everyone reads them ; the curate knows all about them before he delivers them to the secular arm ; Dorothea reads them, and talks their language when she is in the person of the Princess Micomicona. They are the Tales of my Landlord, as we know well from that familiar passage which has been more often printed than any other Spanish sentence in the world ; and the books which the host would not allow to be " heretical or phlegmatic " were equally loved by his wife and his daughter, and by Maritornes as well. The first notable follower of Don Quixote, the English Knight of the Burning Pestle, is composed in the same fashion as his great original, and his chivalry is the chivalry and the romance that are understood by the Grocer's wife in London, and fitly acted by Ralph the prentice.

The literary and critical views of Cervantes have scarcely been enough appreciated, though he gives them plenty of space in Don Quixote and elsewhere. It is impossible to understand him

without following his theory of poetry and prose, his opinions about the ideal and the actual. When you have followed them you will find that they leave you far short of the goal ; but you cannot get on without them. *Don Quixote* is one of the largest and roomiest books in the world, a book that has been, to many readers, a revelation of everything that is meant by imaginative freedom ; the delightful power of bringing real people before the mind. Yet this book, so much greater than any mere fine writing, was composed by a man who held strongly most of the literary superstitions of his time, whose original powers were in great part disabled, down to the end of his days, by literary conventions and formalities. What are the books on which he prided himself? *Don Quixote*, no doubt ; but even more the *Galatea* ; to the very last he kept hoping for the second part of the *Galatea*, a thing long promised, which he had never been able to complete. Now the *Galatea* belongs to one of the most hopelessly artificial kinds of literature, the Arcadian pastoral romance, compared with which the crudest book of chivalry is amusing and life-like. And his latest book, for which he wrote the wonderful preface only a few days before his death, is *Persiles and Sigismunda*, a romance of a

kind that is only less artificial than the pastoral—an imitation of those late Greek rhetorical novels which had such an extraordinary influence on the men of the Renaissance. If anything is contrary to the spirit of *Don Quixote*, you would say it was the formal abstract perfection which was the ideal of the ~~pastoral schools~~, the pure rhetorical beauty that so often in different ways made ruin of poetical originality after the revival of Learning. Yet those Idols were worshipped by Cervantes, who did more than any man, except Rabelais, to turn the opinion of Christendom against the formalists of literature, more than any man after Shakespeare to discredit the vanities of rhetoric, in all business where men and women are really interested. It is all very strange ; perhaps one of the strangest paradoxes in history. It has been pointed out that Cervantes in his literary opinions is almost an echo of Sir Philip Sidney. They speak in the same amusing way about the popular drama of their time—one among many examples of the curious sympathy, long before there was any actual communication, between the literatures of England and Spain. There is the same chaffing of the popular dramatists, the same regard for the unities, and censure of the easy-going plays that paid no attention to the unities—

“*Asia* on the one side and *Affrick* of the other,” said Sidney, “and so many other under Kingdoms that the player when he commeth in must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived.”

“What shall I say” (this is Cervantes in *Don Quixote*, speaking in the person of the Canon of Toledo, P.I. c. xlviiii), “What shall I say of their observance of time except that I have seen a play which began the first act in Europe, the second in Asia, and finished the third in Africa ; if there had been a fourth it would have taken America.” The Canon speaks also, just like Sidney, of the child in swaddling bands in the first act, reappearing as a bearded man in the second.

Sidney and Cervantes have the same respect for Heliodorus, the same conception of the perfect prose romance, the heroic romance, ~~with ideal characters,~~ full of edification, the epic poem in prose. Fielding picked up this idea (of the prose epic) from Cervantes long afterwards, and was fond of regarding his own works in this way ; but Cervantes does not mean *Don Quixote* when he speaks of the prose epic, he means something much more like *Persiles and Sigismunda* ; a dignified composition with ideal personages. Sidney's *Arcadia*, with its mixture of pastoral and

chivalrous romance, is a counterpart of both the idealist works of Cervantes, the *Galatea* and *Persiles*, and anticipates the heroic French romance of the seventeenth century. Sidney, it may be remarked, though he did not write *Don Quixote*, yet shows in some of his sonnets that he had a sharp eye for literary vanity and false rhetoric; the paradox and contradiction between the rhetorical idealist and the ironical comic genius is not as extreme as in the case of Cervantes, but it is there, and of the same sort.

Sidney's essay on Poetry and its echo, the discourse of the Canon of Toledo in *Don Quixote*, are among the evidences of the Renaissance—they prove that there once was such a thing (or force, or agency, or stream of tendency, or what not), and they show how the humanist ideas worked at times to the detriment of literature. Little good in the way of prose romances came from all this meditation on Achilles and Ulysses and Æneas, or from the attempts to reduce them to the service of modern novelists. The revival of learning meant for many years, and for a large part of Europe, the reign of empty and monotonous form; and the mutilation of many ingenuous minds through the tyranny of the barren ideal.<sup>1</sup> When the young

<sup>1</sup> cf. Alfred Jeanroy "Quelques réflexions sur le Quattrocento," *Bulletin italien* v. (1905) pp. 205-236.

man thinks first of the form of his great work, and goes looking about for stuff to put into it, we know what the result will be. Who can number the futile epics made according to receipt, the tragedies in blank verse, the odes written to fill up a pattern by well educated young men? The wind has carried them away. Does not one overhear the vulgar westland voice of Andrew Fair-service saying: "Poet! him a poet! Twa lines o' Davie Lyndsay wad ding a' he ever clerkit!"

There are some, it is true, who have got through with glory; Milton, all his life, was haunted by the empty shadows of the perfect Epic and the perfect Tragedy, like the ghosts craving for a drink of blood in the *Odyssey*; and Milton, as we know, was not defeated. His Epic and Tragedy had blood put into them, and they are still alive. But there are some very queer things in Milton's note-book, that seem to show how near he was to the danger of fruitless ambition, and his long list of possible subjects for a tragedy is just the sort of thing that looks like pretentious failure.

Cervantes also came through the ordeal, but in a different way from Milton. The formal ghosts never ceased to plague him; they came about his dying bed: "Where is that second part of the

*Galatea?*” They interrupt his happiest hours, they pester his freest inventions ; but they do not altogether gorgonise him. When he was not thinking about them he began the story of *Don Quixote*, and his greatest work escapes (not altogether, as we shall see) from the blight of the formalist ideal.

*Don Quixote* is one of the great chaotic books of the early modern age ; it is not as reckless as Rabelais, but just for that reason, just because it is not consistently daring, it is more mixed and incongruous than the book of Pantagruel. Rabelais was quite untouched by those spectral ideal forms that came across the path of Cervantes ; Cervantes is much less secure, and therefore perhaps more interesting.

*Don Quixote* is the most careless great work in the world. If it had come down from antiquity without a name or a date attached to it, it would long ago have been hacked to pieces and distributed by antiquarian commentators, by theorists on the growth of the prose epic, even as a piece of bread is cut up and stowed away when you put it down on an ant-hill. It might have a dozen different authors, besides interpolator A and interpolator B ; and last of all the foolish Homer who cobbles the pieces together into an immortal work.



Consider, for example, the second half of the first part ; the adventures of the Sierra Morena and that which befel all Don Quixote's train in the Inn—a quarter of the whole completed book.

First of all there is the main action: Don Quixote's penance in imitation of Beltenebros (Amadis of Gaul)—Sancho Panza's embassy to Dulcinea—and the intervention of the Curate and Barber to bring Don Quixote home again.

Then there is the story of Cardenio and Lucinda, Don Fernando and Dorothea—a sentimental story with a definite plot, told partly in narrative by Cardenio and Dorothea, partly by Cervantes himself in the course of the day's work.

What is become of the play *The History of Cardenio*, written (according to the record) by Shakespeare and Fletcher? Did Shakespeare read that wonderful encounter between the steady logical madness of Don Quixote and the flighty shaken wits of Cardenio?

Don Quixote as the champion of the Princess Micomicona is brought back to the Inn which he took for a castle. Here it is scarcely possible to make out any chronology. ~~No one goes to bed except Don Quixote~~ ; who fights with the giant in his sleep and cuts his head off, according to Sancho Panza's evidence ; the landlord saw only

his perforated wine-skins. This interrupts the reading of the *Impertinent Curiosity*—one of the Tales of my Landlord—with which the Curate, the Barber, Dorothea and Cardenio are engaged. The *Impertinent Curiosity* is one of the best of the short stories of Cervantes—a correct piece of writing, more Italian than Spanish—one of the tragical cases or problems which were a favourite theme for casuists in fiction long before Browning or Ibsen. Then, after this story is finished, appears Don Fernando with Lucinda and his attendants—a fair troop of guests: *gaudeamus*, says the landlord; and now the scene is taken up with the recognition of the unhappy lovers, and the fortunate conclusion of all their troubles; after the novel that is merely read, you have the novel that is acted by Cardenio and Dorothea, Don Fernando and Lucinda. There is not much difference in style. When that affair is all settled, there are still more visitors, more lovers, to come to that well-frequented inn—the captive escaped from Algiers and his Moorish lady. ~~Then the captive's story, but not till Don Quixote has delivered his oration comparing arms and letters.~~ Next appears the judge and his daughter, Clara, and the judge turns out to be the captive's brother. And

still they come. For even after the ladies have gone to bed there is still no sleep, and Clara is wakened up by Dorothea to listen to the singing of the muleteer outside in the moonlight—the muleteer who is the young man disguised, Donna Clara's lover. And there are still the officers of the Holy Brotherhood to be encountered, and the other barber who had a claim upon Mambrino's helmet, before Don Quixote can be brought home. ✓

It is not merely a medley of adventures, it is that and something more ; it is a confusion of different styles and literary ideals. No great work was ever so casual as this of Cervantes, though there is something like the same accidental origin for the work of Fielding, his English follower and kinsman. A mischievous trick of parody is the beginning of *Joseph Andrews*, "that lewd and ungenerous engraftment," as Richardson called it, on Richardson's stock of moral fiction. The difference between Fielding and Cervantes is that Fielding had Cervantes before him, and as his work grew under his hands into something much more than he intended, he recognised it for what it was, and named it, and gloried in his relation to Cervantes. But Cervantes never got his work so clearly detached in his own

mind from its accidental origins. His genius carried him far beyond his original joke, his quizzing of the books of chivalry, but it did not get him free from all the encumbrances of literary formulas, the pastoral, the abstract novel, and so forth.

If there is any difficulty in understanding *Don Quixote* it is made by the author's genius, which was like Chaucer and Shakespeare in variety of mood. Cervantes was a humourist ; that is, he could think of more than one thing at a time. Many commentators are without this faculty, and they are easily taken in and led to follow out one single line of intention, when the author is really working on a number of different lines all at once.

Hegel saw this in Cervantes, saw how the chivalry that was apparently burlesqued and flouted was there all the time in the impregnable character of Don Quixote, how the hyperbolic romance that seemed to be driven out of the world came back from infinity on the other side. There is the same contradiction and harmony in one of the finest of all the succession of *Don Quixote*, in Miss Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, a slighter but a much more subtle and perfect work than *Don Quixote*. That also, by the way, may have been one of the accidental things that grow

beyond the author's original purpose. *Northanger Abbey* is partly a reduction of Mrs. Radcliffe's inventions, of the *Mysteries of Udolpho*, to the conditions of real life, and Catharine Morland is in difficulties, like Don Quixote, because she takes her romances seriously. But there is much more in the book than the one comparatively trivial plot, the argument of the difference between Udolpho and an English county house in the reign of King George III. And among many other things there is romance, and even a rather heightened and exaggerated sort of romance, in the cruel treatment of the innocent heroine, the malignity of General Tilney, the appearance of his son as champion and defender. Cervantes in like manner puts the burlesque romance of Don Quixote and Dulcinea, the penance of Beltenebros, in the same scene with the affliction of Cardenio ; and he expects you to take Cardenio's story for true pathos, all the while that Don Quixote is imitating that same sort of romantic theme—the distraction of the unhappy lover.

Cervantes, like Shakespeare, plays fast and loose with the old romantic motives, and tries to make the best of both worlds. This comes out in some of his novels ; e.g., in *La Gitanilla* (the

Spanish Gypsy, as we have learned to call her), where a purely romantic story is strengthened by means of notes taken from real life ; the gypsies are not like the conventional shepherds of Arcadia. So in *As You Like It*, Shakespeare gets everything he wants out of the romance of the green wood and the outlaws, the shepherd and shepherdess, while all the time Touchstone is there, and Rosalind finds the workaday world in the Forest of Arden. Of course this suggestion of reality, with Touchstone's criticism of the pastoral life, is all mischief ; the poet is not fair ; he gives you unstinted pure romance at the same time that he imposes on you these ironical references to the real world and its grossness, and pretends that he is a realist.

There is one passage in *Don Quixote*, and a very beautiful one, where Cervantes seems to be playing the same double game with regard to Arcadia, the story of the shepherdess Marcella. Marcella comes forward as an opponent of the conventional literary theory of the martyrs of love : the desperate lover, killed by the disdain of the cruel beauty. She justifies herself against all reproaches, she is not to be blamed for the death of the poor youth Chrysostom. The amatory poets, it is implied, are too ready to take for granted that

the beauty they profess to worship can have no mind, or will, or right to refuse their devotion. But the mischief of Marcella's reasonable argument is that it belongs to an episode where the pastoral conventions, instead of being exploded, are used by Cervantes as thoroughly and with infinitely greater effect than in his *Galatea*. In the Arcadian literature of the Renaissance there is no other scene so good, so distinctly remembered. If the Arcadian convention is justified anywhere it is here.

One cannot help feeling with Cervantes that there is one strong mark of difference between him and the other men of genius who have given in their fiction a large and generous view of the whole of life. He is much less free than Chaucer, not to speak of Shakespeare. He is taken in by the solemn pretences of the learned schools of literature ; he believes in the dignity of certain established forms, the pastoral, the Greek prose romance. This is the true irony of *Don Quixote* and of the spirit of the age and of the world in which *Don Quixote* was written. The author sets out to make fun of the books of chivalry ; and all the time he is himself in the grip of a delusion as absolute as that of his hero—the authority of the most vacant and pithless of

classical superstitions, the phantoms of Arcadian romance. You cannot imagine Shakespeare or Chaucer taken in like this by the literary principles of Polonius. Sancho says—"Every man is as God made him, and even worse very often." Where Cervantes is worse, it is due to the solemn literary prescriptions in which he believed.

But this is not the way to end. The lecturer or preacher is sometimes apt to forget the true relation between himself and his text. There ought to be no irreverence in pointing out what seem to be defects or fallacies in a great writer, and to understand Cervantes properly one has to accept many things much less amusing or profitable than the conversation of Sancho Panza. But the sum of the whole matter for this country is that *Don Quixote* has been made an English book, and adopted as no book has ever been, except the Bible. It is as familiar as the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the country is known almost as well as Vanity Fair and Doubting Castle. It is not quite as clear to English readers as Christian's journey; one remembers different scenes as vividly, perhaps, but the travelling directions are harder to keep in mind. This, however, does not mean much, for where was any country so thoroughly comprehensible as Bunyan's? The scenery of



Don Quixote is not the only picture that we have in our minds from Spain ; no land, except perhaps Greece or Palestine, has given more to that fanciful geography which is pure happiness, attainable luckily by people who were never " furth of this realm." Spain, from the Rock in the South, which is a pillar of Hercules, to the Pass in the North, which is Roncesvalles, is full of the visions of stories ; and of these there are none better known than the places of Don Quixote's wanderings. The house of Don Quixote himself, or rather of Alonso Quixano the Good, is easily recognisable. We know the unhappy library, and the courtyard where the books were burned ; we know the windmills in the open country, and the fulling-mills by the river. There is a very strong light on the landscape where the sun beats down on the shadowless grassless plain, and the air is full of dazzling heat, and the dust rises—that is Pentapolin of the Naked Arm. There are mountain solitudes, and woods and brooks. There are some effects of lamplight, as in the scene where Don Quixote rose against the " Moorism " of the puppet show. The Duke's house is rather vague, but the meeting with the hunting party and the Duchess, her falcon on her wrist, is vivid, and we remember a pretty picture of Don Quixote

entangled in the birding-nets, and helped out of them by the two shepherdesses. There is little need to refer to the last scene of all, Don Quixote's farewell :—

“ There are no birds of this year in last year's nests, \* \* \* and so let Master Notary proceed.”

To think of those scenes and places is to bring to mind the genius of Cervantes, better than by any formal or studied praise.

## The Politics of Burns<sup>1</sup>

THIS discourse, whatever result it may come to, is certainly not wrong in its choice of a subject. To think of the politics of Robert Burns is not like some of the idle and irrelevant enquiries about the lives of poets. In every current opinion about him, in every judgment passed on him since the year 1786, he is taken as a representative man, speaking for his nation, or for the rank he belongs to, or for some new reviving spirit of liberty, or for the old traditional Scottish loyalty, or for these two together, as Jacobin-Jacobite.

Of his loyalty to the house of Stuart there can be no doubt, and there is no doubt that he was affected by the spirit of the French Revolution. But neither of these motives made the real politics of Burns. The French Revolution

<sup>1</sup>A paper read to the Historical Society of the University of Glasgow.

counted for very little in the poetry of Burns, for the good reason that in 1786 the French Revolution was not yet in sight, at any rate from the horizon of Mauchline. It is not wonderful that readers of the life of Burns (in any version of it) should be struck by the story of his later days, and the difficulties of the exciseman who admired the French, and sent them those historical carronades.

The difficulties are well described by Carlyle:

‘Meteors of French politics rise before him; is he not a well-wisher of the French Revolution, a Jacobin, and therefore in that one act guilty of all?’ ‘These accusations’ (Carlyle goes on) ‘it has since appeared, were false enough: but the world hesitated little to credit them.’

And later, we may add, long after the suspicions and jealousies of Dumfries, when Burns’s opinions about France have little left in them to irritate the most sensitive Tory, there is another kind of exaggeration connecting Burns and the French Revolution through the Spirit of the Age. You will find this superstition in Matthew Arnold’s essay on Gray: ‘If Gray, like Burns, had been just 30 when the French Revolution broke out, he would have shown perhaps productiveness and animation in plenty.’

Now this means evidently that Burns lived in a time of expansion, and had the advantage of this expansion or explosion in his poetical fertility, as contrasted with the small volume of Gray's poems. It is true that Burns was born in 1759, and therefore was 30 in 1789; it is true also that the explosion reached his mind. But what had it to do with the Kilmarnock edition of 1786, or the Edinburgh of 1787? And how much of Burns's poetry was written after the explosion of 1789? That sentence of Matthew Arnold may, I think, be worth noting in an historical society, as an example of one of the Idols of the Theatre, one of the fallacies besetting historical study, especially, I should say, the history of literature. The Spirit of the Age is a dangerous demon, and I cannot but think he has imposed on Matthew Arnold in this reference to Burns. The poems of Burns in which he gave his rendering of Ayrshire life; the poems which made his fame at once, through all the length of the Island of Britain, were published before the French Revolution; and further, they show no signs of the coming expansion. The politics of Burns are not, in 1786, affected by the great things coming on; if there is any high spirit in his politics, and there is much, it is derived from

the time of Gray ; the time of depression, as Matthew Arnold counts it. If one is to borrow metaphysical aid to interpret the poetical genius of Burns, why not take the 'freits,' as we may call them here, which will be interpreted 'omens,' if this argument is ever repeated in South Britain, why not take the freits from his birth year of 1759?

It is not less significant, that date, than 1789 ; it is the 'wonderful year,' of 'Hearts of Oak,' of Minden and Quebec and Quiberon. Burns knew well enough what that year meant, and his hero is William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, and also, for the father's sake chiefly, William Pitt, the son :

' An' Will's a true guid fallow's get,  
A name not envy spairges.'

There you have the politics of Burns in 1786, when he was at the height of his power. It is obvious enough, but seems generally to lack interest for readers of Burns. Yet surely there is something worth considering in the fact, which Scott is one author to note clearly, that Burns for a time was a Pittite :

'You will see he plays high Jacobite . . . though I imagine his Jacobitism, like my own, belonged rather to the fancy than the reason.

He was, however, a great Pittite down to a certain period.'

Burns shows an extraordinary gift for finding out all that he wants to know, and he must have wanted to know everything about the Pitts, or he could not have found out Boconnock in Cornwall, the house of the Pitts—regarding which I remember Mr. Phillimore spoke some pleasant things some years ago on a 25th of January—if the newspapers of the 26th are to be trusted. I am sorry I was not there to hear.

There are several points here all at once calling for notice, and seldom getting it from friends of the poet :

The extraordinary talent for history shown by Robert Burns.

His attention to British History in preference to Scottish.

The originality of his views.

He is not fascinated at this time by Charles James Fox. At any rate in his political choice and aims and admirations he refuses to be swayed by the passionate eloquence or the liberal ideas of the statesman with whom we should think he might have had most sympathy. He celebrates him later (1788), without illusion.

Further, and this perhaps when one comes to look into it is the strangest thing of all, his clear, original and careful study of British politics is carried on through the time when his poetical studies are most closely limited to the country he knows—not Scotland, but Ayrshire, and not the whole of Ayrshire.

To understand the politics of Burns it is necessary to think of his position with regard to the scene and the substance of his poetry—the poetry of 1786 and 1787, to which he never added another volume of the same sort in the ten years remaining, and scarcely a poem except *Tam o' Shanter*.

How did Burns come to write the Kilmarnock volume? This problem may be hard to answer, and it is possibly foolish. But there are some misconceptions about his circumstances and education, and his place in literature, which must be cleared away. Carlyle gives his authority to some of these in his review of Lockhart, and his lecture on the Hero as Man of Letters:

‘With no furtherance but such knowledge as dwells in a poor man’s hut, and the rhymes of a Fergusson or Ramsay for his standard of beauty.’

Now we know that his standard of beauty



was formed in part upon the rhymes of Ramsay and Fergusson, but we know that it was influenced also by Pope and Steele and Beattie's work, by Shakespeare and Milton, by Thomson, Shenstone, and Gray and Goldsmith. You can tell a man by his quotations; he quotes *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Troilus and Cressida*. He writes to Mrs. Dunlop of his recourse to the dramas of Thomson. He quotes to Clarind from Gray's *Bard*:

'Dear as the light that visits these sad eyes,  
Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart.'

Is not the standard of beauty there?

Carlyle on Burns again, in *Hero-Worship*:—

'This Burns appeared under every disadvantage; uninstructed, poor, born only to hard manual toil; and writing, when it came to that, in a rustic special dialect, known only to a small province of the country he lived in. Had he written even what he did write in the general language of England, I doubt but he had already become universally recognised as being, or capable to be, one of our greatest men.'

I am not quite sure what Carlyle means by a rustic special dialect, known only to a small province of the country he lived in. Of course the

language of Kyle and Carrick has peculiarities of its own. Burns does not write exactly the same language as the Scottish poets of Lothian and the Mearns; there are words and phrases in Fergusson, and also let me say for the pleasure of naming them, in *Hamewith* and in *Horace* of the Ochils, that are not found in Burns. The language of Ross of Lochlee, in *Helenore, the Fortunate Shepherdess* ('Lindy and Nory'), must have been strange to Burns, though probably more familiar to his father and his Montrose cousins, but it was no great hindrance to his understanding and appreciation of 'Lindy and Nory'; and as for readers in the South, it was in England that he found at once some of his most enthusiastic admirers, among some of the most fastidious and most purely Southern in taste and breeding. I mean particularly William Gilpin, the careful and delightful student of the picturesque, who, if any one, might have been offended by Scotch drink, Scotch religion and Scotch manners. Instead of which Gilpin, the refined and elegant, chooses precisely from a poem on Scotch drink a stanza for the death of a hero, and he quotes it at Killiecrankie for an epitaph on Dundee. Coleridge in the *Friend* makes a similar use of the same context, without the parti-

cular reference, though decorously he omits the line :

‘Clap in his cheek a Highland gill.’

Wordsworth, speaking of the death of Dundee in one of his early poems, shows that he had read Gilpin, and had read Burns as quoted by Gilpin, and did not disapprove :

‘And glad Dundee in ‘faint huzzas’ expired.’

It is curious.

There are selections from Burns in the *Annual Register*, as soon as may be after the Edinburgh edition.

Scottish poetry had been regularly within the knowledge of Southern readers for two or three generations before Burns—we may say perhaps ever since *Christ’s Kirk on the Green* was published at Oxford by Edmund Gibson. A good example and proof of this is the list of subscribers to *Orpheus Caledonius*, London, 1733 ; there are many English names among them, more English than Scotch, I should say, guessing roughly—the Rt. Hon. William Pulteney, Esq., Thomas Pitt, Esq., Mrs. Pitt, George Venables Vernon, Esq. (6 sets), Lady Robert Walpole. I believe that Horace Walpole read his mother’s copy.

Burns wrote in the language of Kyle, because that was his natural language. But he had not to

choose between that and English. Any page of Burns will show that his language is not to be described simply as a special dialect ; it has all manner of variations between the pure vernacular and the book-English. It is not, I think, commonly recognised how much an affair of art, an assumed and artificial style, was the Scottish poetry of the eighteenth century ; how different in its condition from the poetry of the old ‘makaris,’ Dunbar and Douglas and the rest.

Beattie writes a poem to Ross of Lochlee, an occasional diversion, in the familiar stanza :

‘ O Ross, thou wale o’ hearty cocks,  
 Sae crouse and canty wi’ thy jokes,  
 Thy hamely auld warld muse provokes  
     Me for a while  
 To ape our guid plain country folks  
     In verse and style.

O bonny are our green sward hows  
 Where:through the birks the burny rows,  
 And the bee bums, and the ox lows,  
     And saft winds rusle,  
 And shepherd-lads on sunny knows  
     Blaw the blythe fusle.’

He passes this off as a *tour de force*, a literary joke, and such indeed it was. And so are the

Scots verses of Stevenson and of Hugh Hali-  
burton and the author of *Hamewith*, obviously.  
And so are the Scots verses of Robert Burns and  
of Allan Ramsay and of Robert Fergusson before  
him. Burns adopts a literary convention in  
the same way, though more consistently and  
thoroughly than Beattie. None of his forms are  
invented ; all are taken from the tradition which  
had been founded in the seventeenth century by  
the *Elegy on Habbie Simson, piper of Kilbarchan*,  
developed and confirmed by Allan Ramsay. The  
readers of Burns, his rhyming friends and com-  
petitors, all understood this. It is all a game of  
language, 'crambo-clink,' with rules and patterns  
of its own, used for fun by men who wrote their  
serious business letters in English, and exacted  
the catechism in English from their children and  
servants, and sang in English the metrical version  
of the Psalms by Mr. Francis Rous of Truro,  
sometime Provost of Eton.

Now when this is understood it will be found,  
I think, to have some bearing upon the politics of  
Burns, though possibly I may seem to have  
wandered away from the proper field of the  
Historical Society over the borders into philology,  
if not into mere rhetoric and *belles lettres*.

It is a great thing for an artist to inherit a

strong tradition, to belong to a school. It means that he has all the strength of his own and the last generation to draw upon ; he does not waste his time in solitary adventures ; he is not left to himself ; he is saved from caprice and melancholy, from the fate of Chatterton. Think of the difference between the art of Burns, his secure command of all his arguments and all his forms on the one hand, and the poetry of his contemporary Blake on the other—in so many ways miraculous, yet at what an expense of thought and care in finding out the new ways. The poems of Fergusson, as Dr. John Service expressed it, in a true conceit, are the *juvenilia* of Burns ; and Fergusson himself worked in a traditional way.

The security of Burns as a poet with the inherited forms and examples of Ramsay and Fergusson goes along with security and confidence in the choice of themes. His poetry, for all its rustic character and language, has the distinctive mark of aristocratic literature. It is self-possessed, at ease and sure of itself ; classical. It is not restless, or self-conscious or anxious or experimental or *arriviste*. It has the true dignity, like that of the man who knows he is master in his own house, and is accustomed to converse

with his equals, and has no reason to go craving for what he has not got.

When Keats came up by Glen App, and so by Ballantrae and Girvan and Maybole to Alloway, thinking rightly about Burns, more than most men, he saw Arran over the sea, and wondered why the vision of the island had never passed into Burns's poetry. Arran had been before him all his days, and there is no word of it anywhere, in any of his prose or rhyme. For this disregard there was probably good reason. Burns has left out of his poetry many other things which must have been equally within his knowledge, and might have been wrought into the fabric of his verse. He was thought by some to be indifferent to the beauties of nature. He was certainly irresponsible when people gave utterance to their hearts of sensibility:—

‘He disliked to be tutored in matters of taste, and could not endure that one should run shouting before him whenever any fine object appeared.’ (Cunningham, Chambers II. 156 n.) Andrew Lang, in a sonnet written under the influence of Wordsworth, has uttered the same complaint of those who shout

‘To me, to me the poet, O look there!’

But it is not only in matters of this sort that

Burns is economical and reticent. The Kilmarnock volume, which expresses so much of the life of Ayrshire, leaves out a great deal. Burns keeps to the region he knows ; neighbouring provinces are left unnoticed, though he might easily have touched upon them, and brought back profitable things. Why does he go down to the sea, and no further ? Why does he make nothing of the contraband trade with which he came to be acquainted at Kirkoswald ? If he was too proud to speak of the Arran hills which did not belong to him, might he not have gone sailing with fishermen of Girvan or Ayr, Dunure or Turnberry ? No, they were not his own people ; his own people are the farmers or their cotters, and it was not his business to go looking for subjects. The fishermen are left out. So on the other side the further moorlands and their shepherds are left out. He takes the Doon where it comes near him ; he does not wander up to talk with the lonely shepherds on the Galloway border ; Loch Doon he never thinks about, nor the wild uplands where his river comes down from the granite of Loch Enoch, and houses are far between.

While he thus restricted himself in his choice of Ayrshire themes, he was attending to contemporary history. He must have read the news-



papers and probably also the *Scots Magazine* with extraordinary care. And he does not read under the influence of that Scottish prejudice which he was proud to confess in the well known and often quoted words : ‘ the spirit of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest.’

He is not particularly good at Scottish history. His Scottish politics are determined by Scotch drink. But the politics of the United Kingdom of Great Britain in his own lifetime were noted with a diligence which the biographers and commentators of Burns have passed over very lightly.

This historical study comes out in two poems particularly : the birthday poem to the King and the historical fragment on the American war and the parliamentary vicissitudes following—‘ When Guilford good our pilot stood.’ His carefulness is proved through one of the conventions of that sort of lyrical satire. The rule is that persons are not to be named by their right names, if another name can be provided. It is that rule (together with the need for a rhyme to *winnock* and *bannock* and *Nanse Tinnock*) that puts *Boconnock* for *Pitt* or *Chatham*. Hence *Guilford* and not

*Lord North, Montague for Lord Sandwich, Grenville for the statesman commonly called Lord Temple. The Duke of York is Right Reverend Osnabrug* (of course there are other obvious motives here). *Lord George Germaine* appears under his other name of *Sackville*. A note in the Centenary Edition, from an autograph manuscript seen by the editors, shows that Burns originally wrote *Germaine* :

‘And bauld G——ne wham Minden’s plain  
To fame will ever blaw, man.’

Altered :

‘And Sackville doure, wha stood the stoure  
The German chief to thraw, man.’

I believe that Burns thought of changing it because *Germaine* was the right name, and therefore the wrong name for his purpose.

It does not look as if he were working with an index or a peerage at his side. He knows the names and titles of these persons of quality because he is interested in British history. Boconnock comes to his mind because he has found out some time before what he wants to know about the family of Pitt; just as he does not need a file of newspapers, or a set of the *Scots Magazine*, or the *Annual Register*,

when he finds his old soldier among the Jolly Beggars :

‘My prenticeship was past where my leader breathed  
his last,  
When the bloody die was cast on the heights of  
Abram ;  
I served out my trade when the gallant game was  
played,  
And the Moro low was laid at the sound of the drum.

I lastly was with Curtis among the floating batteries.  
And there I left for witness an arm and a limb,  
Yet let my country need me, with Elliot to lead me,  
I’ll clatter on my stumps at the sound of a drum.’

The fragment ‘When Guilford good’ looks at first like a rigmarole of mere annals turned into burlesque rhyme. But it works up to a climax, and it is not a fragment; it is the war-song of William Pitt, the young hero. It turns into that, whatever Burns may have first intended, or even if he intended nothing in particular when he began. And he certainly had the whole history in his mind when he began, and also his judgment on the characters. You may notice that his alteration of *Germaine* proves this. It is not merely a conventional vague illusion to Lord George Sackville’s notorious cowardice at Minden. It is so, in the first version; but the second,

the authorised version, shows that Burns knew what happened at Minden, and he has put this into a phrase so mischievous that the point of it may easily escape notice and Sackville be mistaken for a hero:

‘wha stood the stoure  
The German chief to thraw, man.’

It looks at first like heroic resistance; till you remember that the German chief, Ferdinand of Brunswick, was Lord George Sackville’s commander, that the *stoure* means the repeated order to charge, with a prophetic allusion to the trial that followed. ‘The German chief to thraw’ is not to confound the enemy, but to disappoint his own general.

Burns’s politics at this time are clear enough. Chatham is his great hero because he knows about Minden and Quebec, and the taking of Havana, ‘when the Moro low was laid.’ And William Pitt the younger has his regard partly for his father’s sake, and partly for his own courage and his resistance to the coalition of Fox and North, which Burns could not stand because it was meanness and knavery. He does not object to Fox because of his tinkler jaw or dicing box and sporting lady. Fox’s gambling

was merely a good thing for a satirical poet, as in the address to the Prince of Wales in the *Dream*:

‘That e’er ye brak Diana’s pales,  
Or rattl’d dice wi’ Charlie.’

But he seriously did not like ‘yon mixtie maxtie queer hotch potch, the Coalition,’ and he seriously regarded Pitt as a high-spirited young man breaking through the intrigues of party politics and likely to go further. And this is what he puts into his rhyme of the American war and Rockingham and Shelburne and the Coalition, and Fox’s India Bill, and Temple’s message from the King, ‘a secret word or twa, man,’ and Pitt’s courageous adventure—a long way from Mauchline, but touched off with the same intensity as Black Russell and Moodie and Peebles from the Water-foot:

‘But word an’ blow, North, Fox, and Co.  
Gowff’d Willie like a ba’, man,  
Till Suthron raise an’ coost their claise  
Behind him in a raw, man:  
An’ Caledon threw by the drone,  
An’ did her whittle draw, man;  
An’ swoor fu’ rude, thro’ dirt an’ bluid,  
To mak it guid in law, man.’

*The Dream* of the 4th of June, 1786, is the

other example of Burns's interest in the history of his country, which is not politically Scotland, but Great Britain. Also of the quickness and readiness with which he followed the news from London. *The Dream* is suggested by Thomas Warton's periodical birthday ode published in the newspapers. It is worth mentioning that while the ode of 1786 prompted Burns's poem, the ode of the previous year was the occasion of the notorious burlesque Probationary Odes, the sequel of the *Rolliad*. So that Burns here again had his eye on the same sort of things as attracted the wits of London. He has nothing much to learn from them in the art of satirical poetry. Here again, though here only by the way, Pitt comes in as the statesman to be respected; and Burns appears as the champion of the Navy against retrenchment in a passage which may possibly have been quoted, though I have never noticed it, in speeches of knights and squires who represent our burghs and shires:

'I'm no mistrusting Willie Pitt,  
When taxes he enlarges,  
(An' Will's a true guid fallow's get,  
A name not envy spairges),  
That he intends to pay your debt,  
An' lessen a' your charges;

But, God sake! let nae saving fit  
Abridge your bonie barges  
An' boats this day.'

'Burns was a great Pittite down to a certain period,' and that period was the end of his free, unimpeded work as a poet. He is a poet for the rest of his life, but never again with that irresistible command of his art, that certainty in all his various themes and moods which went with the volume of poems chiefly in the Scottish dialect. After that he is distracted. His work in the songs, as we watch it in his correspondence with Johnson and Thomson is of a different sort, often painful and laborious. He wastes his time thinking about impossible plans for Scottish drama and Scottish opera. And his political opinions change. His important Whig friends make him unsure of himself; he has to ask Henry Erskine whether it will do to print 'When Guilford good our pilot stood.' He takes to wearing the buff and blue, and owes allegiance to Mr. Fox. At the same time he makes more than in early days of his Jacobite sentiment; he writes his worst verse in a poem on the name of Stuart:

'Though something like moisture conglobes in my eye.'  
To make up for that—

'It was a' for our rightfu' king.'

But before he had forgotten his earlier studies and interests he wrote a deliberate argument which may be quoted here.

I cannot see anything wrong in Burns's letter to the *Star*, Nov. 8, 1788, protesting against some of the Whig rhetoric over the centenary of the glorious Revolution; it seems to me right in history and right in sentiment; with a shrewd stroke at the orators who blamed the tyranny of the Stuart kings and ignored the tyranny of parliaments.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE STAR.'

NOV. 8TH, 1788.

SIR,—Notwithstanding the opprobrious epithets with which some of our philosophers and gloomy sectarians have branded our nature—the principle of universal selfishness, the proneness to all evil, they have given us; still, the detestation in which inhumanity to the distressed, and insolence to the fallen, are held by all mankind, shows that they are not natives of the human heart. Even the unhappy partner of our kind who is undone—the bitter consequence of his follies or his crimes—who but sympathizes with the miseries of this ruined profligate brother? We forget the injuries, and feel for the man.

I went, last Wednesday, to my parish church, most cordially to join in grateful acknowledgment to the



AUTHOR OF ALL GOOD, for the consequent blessings of the glorious Revolution. To that auspicious event we owe no less than our liberties, civil and religious; to it we are likewise indebted for the present Royal Family, the ruling features of whose administration have ever been mildness to the subject, and tenderness of his rights.

Bred and educated in revolution principles, the principles of reason and common sense, it could not be any silly political prejudice which made my heart revolt at the harsh abusive manner in which the reverend gentleman mentioned the house of Stuart, and which, I am afraid, was too much the language of the day. We may rejoice sufficiently in our deliverance from past evils, without cruelly raking up the ashes of those whose misfortune it was, perhaps as much as their crime, to be the authors of those evils, and we may bless God for all his goodness to us as a nation, without at the same time cursing a few ruined, powerless exiles, who only harboured ideas, and made attempts, that most of us would have done, had we been in their situation.

The 'bloody and tyrannical House of Stuart,' may be said with propriety and justice, when compared with the present royal family, and the sentiments of our days; but is there no allowance to be made for the manners of the times? Were the royal contemporaries of the Stuarts more attentive to their subjects' rights? Might not the epithets of 'bloody and tyrannical' be, with at least equal justice, applied to the House of Tudor, of York, or any other of their predecessors?

The simple state of the case, Sir, seems to be this :— At that period, the science of government, the knowledge of the true relation between king and subject, was like other sciences and other knowledge, just in its infancy, emerging from dark ages of ignorance and barbarity.

The Stuarts only contended for prerogatives which they knew their predecessors enjoyed, and which they saw their contemporaries enjoying; but these prerogatives were inimical to the happiness of a nation and the rights of subjects.

In this contest between prince and people, the consequence of that light of science which had lately dawned over Europe, the monarch of France, for example, was victorious over the struggling liberties of his people; with us, luckily, the monarch failed, and his unwarrantable pretensions fell a sacrifice to our rights and happiness. Whether it was owing to the wisdom of leading individuals, or to the justling of parties, I cannot pretend to determine; but, likewise happily for us, the kingly power was shifted into another branch of the family, who, as they owed the throne solely to the call of a free people, could claim nothing inconsistent with the covenanted terms which placed them there.

The Stuarts have been condemned and laughed at for the folly and impracticability of their attempts in 1715 and 1745. That they failed, I bless God: but cannot join in the ridicule against them. Who does not know that the abilities or defects of leaders and commanders are often hidden until put to the touchstone

of exigency ; and that there is a caprice of fortune, an omnipotence in particular accidents and conjectures of circumstances, which exalt us as heroes, or brand us as madmen, just as they are for or against us?

Man, Mr. Publisher, is a strange, weak, inconsistent being : who would believe, Sir, that in this our Augustan age of liberality and refinement, while we seem so justly sensible and jealous of our rights and liberties, and animated with such indignation against the very memory of those who would have subverted them—that a certain people under our national protection should complain, not against our monarch and a few favorite advisers, but against our WHOLE LEGISLATIVE BODY, for similar oppression, and almost in the very same terms, as our forefathers did of the House of Stuart ! I will not, I cannot, enter into the merits of the cause ; but I dare say the American Congress, of 1776, will be allowed to have been as able and enlightened as the English Convention was in 1688 ; and that their posterity will celebrate the centenary of their deliverance from us, as duly and sincerely as we do ours from the oppressive measures of the wrong-headed House of Stuart.

To conclude, Sir, let every man who has a tear for the many miseries incident to humanity, feel for a family, illustrious as any in Europe, and unfortunate beyond historic precedent ; and let every Briton (and particularly every Scotsman), who ever looked with reverential pity on the dotage of a parent, cast a veil over the fatal mistakes of the kings of his forefathers.

R. B.

Burns's opinions about the French Revolution have nothing dishonourable in them, and nothing very difficult to understand. They are like Wordsworth's, but of course without Wordsworth's intimate knowledge of France, and with sympathies less intense. He hates the invaders of France, and there is deadly contempt in his rude rhyme :

'You're welcome to Despots, Dumourier !'

But, like Wordsworth, he turns to think of his own country when his country is in danger. There is no discord or contradiction between 'A man's a man for a' that,' Jan. 1795 ('two or three good prose thoughts inverted into rhyme'), and the song for the Dumfries Volunteers (*Dumfries Journal*, May 5th, 1795).

'Be Britain still to Britain true  
 Amang oursels united,  
 For never but by British hands  
 Maun British wrangs be righted !  
                   \*                  \*                  \*

The wretch that would a tyrant own,  
 And the wretch, his true-born brother,  
 Who'd set the mob above the throne,  
 May they be damn'd together !  
 Who will not sing *God save the King!*  
 Shall hang as high's the steeple ;  
 But while we sing *God save the King!*  
 We'll not forget the people !'

Whatever may be the value of his later thoughts in prose or rhyme, they have not the significance or the force of the miraculous volume of 1786, with the other poems written but not printed at that time. Burns as a poet is to be judged by the work of those years ; the more this is studied the clearer is the relation between his command of the world of Mauchline and Ayr, and his political understanding of what is meant by Great Britain.





